

REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment (and the accompanying Request for Continued Examination or "RCE") follows the February 27, 2004 Decision on Appeal in which the rejection of claims 1-10 was affirmed. During prosecution, the Examiner indicated that claim 10 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, and to overcome the §112 rejection, as well as to include "the subject matter described at pages 8-9 and shown in figure 1 - figure 1 showing the arrangement and configuration of two sipes 6 formed in a block at the central zone." See the January 27, 1999 Office Action.

By this Amendment, claim 10 is rewritten in independent form and to include the subject matter mentioned above which the Examiner indicated would put the claim in allowable condition. Also, claim 10 includes the changes made to claim 1 in the June 14, 2000 Amendment After Final, which the Examiner indicated in the June 22, 2000 Advisory Action would be entered, since it overcame the §112 rejection. Consequently, claim 10 is now believed to be allowable. Further, the remaining claims are properly dependent from claim 10, and as such should be allowable also.

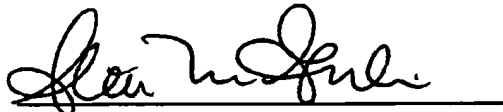
In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue that the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephonic interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number listed below.

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
U.S. SERIAL NO. 08/997,368

ART UNIT 1733
Q48849

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all additional required fees (except the Issue Fee and/or the Publication Fee) to our Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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